

ROUND VALLEY -- THEN AND NOW

1869 - 1913 - 1976

On the twelvth day of July 1869 James Kearl and Merlin Eastham were married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. And in deference to President Brigham Young's request that they go to help settle the south end of the Bear Lake Valley they were prepared to leave immediately for that destination.

Their wagon was loaded with essentials for some months of camping which they knew they would have to do. They were taking milk cows and an extra team and a friend of James, George Willis, went along to help drive the cows. Merlin said she often walked for a few miles as a way of resting from the rough ride in a wagon over rough roads and sometimes trails from which they had to remove rocks and brush in order to get by. The trip took them two weeks. They had to stop often to let the stock rest and graze. I am not exactly sure which route they took but in any case it had to be over hills and through canyons.

They arrived in Bear Lake Valley near the end of July, 1869. James looked the area over and then made camp on the west side of the Round Valley -- and I imagine he might have said, "Merlin, we will settle here," and she might have said, "Yes, James." (Although I think she always called him Jim.) So they set up their little stove and made camp out in the open for six weeks while James harvested the wild hay which grew in abundance. The hay was for winter feed for the stock, although I think in an open winter cows and horses could winter out, there was so much good grazing on the hills and in the meadows.

I have often wondered if James took along with them some sort of mowing machine or if he used a scythe. That too I shall never know because there is no one left who can tell me.

Before cold weather came James and George Willis and Merlin had built a little one room log cabin in which to winter. George returned to Salt Lake but I will add here that he had liked what he saw and came back to Bear Lake in the summer of 1870 and started a place of his own north of Laketown. Eventually he married one of the Cheney girls, Delina, and they raised some fine children-- one of whom is Elijah Lige, husband of your cousin Norma.

I am quite sure there were other families already in Round Valley when James and Merlin arrived and still others came during the years Mother Merlin

lived there -- she seemed to have known them so well.

In the summer of 1870 James built a large room on to the original little cabin -- and this one had a lumber roof and floor. Probably the nearest place to acquire lumber would have been north 40 miles to Paris or Montpelier or south 50 miles to Evanston.

On August 24th 1870 Merlin's first child was born, a girl, and she was named Edith. In 1872 Jeanette was born, followed in 1874 by John Henry and then George was born in 1876.

During these years the following folks had taken up their abode. As they lived around the semi circle there was the Robinsons, then the Prices, Hydens and the five Earley brothers, George, Lehi, Jack, Tom (?), and Jerry. (Mother always called them the Earley Boys although I think all of them were older than she was.) There were also the Smith, Anderson and Murphy families.

Sometime after Merlin and her four children were settled at Otter Creek there was a ward with Lehi Earley as Bishop and also a one room school house. Laketown was not a ward while Merlin was in Round Valley but there was a meeting house and a presiding Elder and the folks went to church there when possible.

Mother often told us of the friendly people and neighbors always ready to help neighbors, of their little socials at one or another's house, of games they played with the winner receiving for a prize a hard boiled egg, (and eggs were hard to come by in those days.)

Father James who was very far-sighted and never believed in putting all his "eggs in one basket" had been roaming around the country and had seen some good land about 5 miles north of Randolph, with a nice stream of water running through it. Land seemed to be for the taking in those days. I doubt that there was a law of any kind to prohibit this. However I have never known for sure, and could have found out by asking a few questions.

Sometime between the birth of George and Robert, James had built a log house near the Otter Creek and moved Merlin and the four children there. I don't know what people did when they moved, if they could sell and give a title for the land or if they simply abandoned it. At any rate the family was settled at Otter Creek and in April of 1879 Robert was born and in January of 1882 Willis (Will) was born.

The family lived two winters in Randolph so the older children could go to school-- that would have been Edith, Jeanette and John.

In May of 1882 the whole country was swept with an epidemic of diphtheria.

It has always seemed a strange thing that the man and wife who had it were heading for the north end of the valley and were lost in the darkness and getting on the wrong road had seen the light in mother's house, and had come there seeking help because they were ill and they didn't know what was wrong with them. If they had taken the right road they would have stayed overnight in Laketown and spread the disease there. But as it happened or maybe that was the way it was to be. At any rate, Edith, John, George, Jeanette and Robert all suffered the diptheria and within a week Jeanette, 10 years old and little 3 year old Robert were dead. There could be no funeral because of the nature of the disease, so Father, with the help of the man who made the little caskets and others who assisted buried those little ones in the Laketown Cemetery. Mother couldn't leave the other sick children. Two little white marble stones mark those graves which were made almost 94 years ago. Mother said people came from Round Valley, Laketown and Randolph to help in any way they could and when I think of things like that I think of words from one of my favorite songs -- "Dear Hearts and Gentle People."

There is no record of dates so I can only assume by the births of the children when the family moved. But sometime between 1882 and 1887 the family left Otter Creek and moved into another log house in Laketown where Morton was born 11 March 1885 and Ethyl was born Jan. 5, 1887. For some reason Mother spent one more winter in Round Valley and Edith took care of the children in Laketown so they could attend school. Chase was born in Round Valley 10th Feb. 1890.

Mother in all this time had not seen her parents or sisters. To get to Grantsville meant a long trip to Evanston with a freight wagon, to Salt Lake City by train and then someone to come in from Grantsville to meet her. However, she made the trip and took a baby with her. It would have been Ethel since Grandmother Eastham didn't live long after mother saw her and she died in 1889, June 22nd. Mother was so happy to have seen them all again and that was the last time she saw them or went to Grantsville until she came to stay with us here in the winter, and for years there had been a town reunion in January and one of Mother's nieces who lived here always took us out. I remember how Mother's nieces treated her -- like she was beloved and so welcome. They never let her come back for several days. Of course her sisters were gone. They were all older than she was and some of the nieces almost as old, and all passed away now. But I shall always remember them with love for the way they treated my mother.

I was born in Laketown 19 Feb., 1892 in a log house, the 10th and last of James and Mother's children. All of us were born in log houses, and when any one speaks of Abraham Lincoln having been born in a log house I can say "me too."

However some years before I was born Father had decided that at the head of Laketown Canyon there were springs of nice fresh water and acres of fine grazing and it might make a nice place for a family to live in the summer and mother and the children were willing to go so a cabin was built for them and a little house over one of the springs with shelves all around to hold the milk pans. They moved quite a herd of milk cows there. The children were old enough to milk and mother churned every day, sometimes more than once a day. Somehow the butter was packed in salt and kept cool in the spring house and when some freighter went by going to Evanston from the Bear Lake Valley the butter was sold at 15 cents a pound. Evanston, Wyoming was a railroad town and a fine market for produce. Mother has said that Edith was fifteen and then sixteen years old those summers and she would walk to Laketown every Sunday to Sunday School. The cows had to be milked so all of them couldn't go. The boys would have been John about 12, George 10 and Will 8 and I imagine Mother could take a hand with the milking also. She has told me of those summers and how they all loved being there. The place is still called "Kearl Springs" and no one lives there now. I can only think that in those days some ninty years ago, that people used what they called "squatters rights" to settle for a time somewhere and then, if they desired move on.

Before we move from Kearl Springs, I would like to tell you of a very faith promoting incident which occured while the family was there the second summer. Father had gone to Ogden to purchase some equipment for farming and also supplies for the family since the flour was almost gone and there were other things they needed. On the night Father was to return Mother used the last "as she thought" of the flour to make bisquits for their supper. The children had gone to bed and she was awaiting Father's return and when she heard a wagon coming she went out to find it was not Father but two strange men. They told her their names (I regret that they were forgotten in the following years). However they were two Church officials who going down through the Bear Lake Valley to visit the Latter Day Saints. They had driven from Evanston, their horses were weary, they were tired and hungry. They told Mother they had their own bedding to make their bed in the wagon box if they could stay and rest their tired horses and get something to eat. She had plenty of milk, cream

and butter and molasses, but what would she do for bread. Nevertheless, and nothing daunted, she took a clean cloth and dusted together enough flour to make bisquits for them but worried about their breakfast. I can imagine she was a bit shy and hoped not to have to tell them she couldn't even give them bread. She told the children and they got out of bed and knelt and prayed that Father would come home and Mother waited up for him but she never gave up. With the break of dawn she decided to look once more in the flour barrel, although she knew it was completely empty. But it wasn't. As she told that story tears would come in her eyes. She said that in the bottom of that barrel was a little mound of flour, like someone had tipped it out of a bowl. She hurriedly whipped up a batch of bisquits and had the table set when the men came in. They said they had never tasted such good food and gave her their blessing when they left. Father arrived about noon. His wagon had broken down and he simply had to wait for daylight to fix it. He brought an abundance of food and bags of candy for the children. I know this is a true story. Mother was in no way what you would call a visionary person and she was the soul of truth.

After the second summer at "Kearl Springs" mother settled down in Laketown and began her church work. She sang in the choir, was counselor in Primary, taught the first religion class, taught Sunday School, was counselor to three different Relief Society Presidents during which time she was for eight years President of the Y.L.M.I.A. and then when she was 70 years old the Bishop came asking her to be President of the Primary. She felt that she was getting too old for the responsibility but she accepted and held that position for two years.

Father had thought for some time that the big spring which fed the "Big Creek", wide enough and deep enough to be called a river and after watering many acres of crops flowed into the lake.... that this spring water could be used to run a saw mill. He had acquired land in that area where the main ranch buildings were -- and are -- and so he built a saw mill and this was a blessing to many people who had gone so far to get lumber which had been shipped by rail from somewhere. Now these folks had only to bring in the logs, which were plentiful in the west hills.

I was not yet four when the building of our new house began. This was a source of interest to everyone, but more especially to my brother, Chase, and I. Since it was built only a few rods from the log house in which we lived we could be on the job most of the time. It was a source of wonder because there was an upstairs, four bedrooms -- two of which were never quite finished since there was

never a partition between them -- always a wonderful place to play, for the grandchildren, on stormy days. Mother's bedroom was downstairs and there was a front room (called living room now), a big kitchen and a pantry, and a kitchen porch and a front porch. I don't remember our moving in nor what happened to the old house. The logs went to the saw mill no doubt.

I know we were living there when my sister Edith died, at the birth of her second child, a son. This was in August 1896. I was too young to feel the grief the older ones felt or to understand it. I only remember that everyone seemed very sad.

Our brother George went away to Canada not so long after Edith was gone. I wouldn't have missed him too much because I was not much past 5 years. He had been away from home a good deal with the sheep and to Logan to school. However, I know Mother felt bad when he went. He was a very nice guy to have around, always thoughtful and kind.

Mother never neglected her family but as Ethel and I grew old enough to take up some responsibility of housekeeping, Mother went more and more frequently to help the sick or injured, at the birth of a baby or in time of death. She had natural nursing ability and while she never went to stay on for any length of time she always answered every call. She had such a marvelous way of knowing just the right thing to do at the right time, and a true comforter.

At the same time Father was setting the broken bones and drawing aching teeth and once in awhile sewing up bad cuts -- and he never had a failure. I think the good Lord guided his hand sometime, and Mother's also. No fee was ever asked -- no fee given.

Mother kept up with all her church obligations and in the cold winters we had family night every night, making molasses candy and listening to Mother's true stories of her home in England and pioneering to Utah. After we were all grown and gone from home she opened her house to anyone who wanted to come and especially to children. They came often with their sugar or molasses to have a candy pull and listen to her stories. She was "Grandma" to them all.

When Mother was settled in Laketown she resumed her friendship with the Round Valley folks. I remember when I was a little girl going with her to see the Robinsons and Jerry and Ursula ( ) Earley and they came to visit us, and then, although I didn't realize it at that time, the older ones (the parents) were passing away, also some of the younger ones. All are buried in the Round

Valley Cemetery. The young ones I knew best moved away. There was no longer a ward or a school.

Then in 1912 Will and Bertha heard that the John Anderson place was for sale. They knew they would have to branch out into something so they bought the Anderson place. I don't know how much land there was but there were fruit trees and a strawberry patch and a house which consisted of one large room and a "lean to". Gradually it was built into a large nice ranch house.

In the meantime, Thomas Ryder, who owned property adjoining and a good house near Will and Bertha's wanted to sell so Mart and Carrie bought that and Will and Mart merged and became the "Kearl Brothers." They continued to run Mother's little farm which Will had come back from Canada to manage when Father died suddenly in 1902.

Will and Bertha had seven children, Mart and Carrie eleven, so once more the south end of the valley knew the voice of Kearl children -- who grew up, played and worked, went to school and church in Laketown, and I have wondered what Mother's thoughts were when she was with them taking care of the sick or just visiting. She no doubt looked across the valley to the spot where their little cabin stood and of her four children born there, of the two girls who had passed away and the two boys who had gone off to Canada, a place (until she visited there) she had always thought was never really thawed. She worried about the children, that they were not warm and maybe even hungry because she thought very little grew there. I am always happy that Chase took her to visit there so she could change her mind.

Well, as is always the case, those children all grew up and one by one married and moved away. George and I moved away to Salt Lake City and my sister Ethel, died when her second baby was born. I knew Mother would be lonely when I was gone, but she came and spent the winter with us, every one of the nine years she lived after we moved away. I think she enjoyed it but she was always anxious to go to her own home in the spring.

When she left us the last time it was April 1934. I felt she would not be back again and in June, the folks called that she was quite ill. I took Edna Rae, who was nine and she stayed on the ranch with the cousins. Mother never left her room again, although she would sit up in a chair once in awhile. Every one was so good to us and kept reminding me of all the things Mother had done for them.

My brother, George, came home from Canada. He had been home once before

and many years before to spend three winter months. This time it was in August, He stayed three weeks and except for nights, it seems to me that he spent most of the time sitting by Mother's bed, holding her hand, and often with tears on his cheeks. But he was a comfort to her and to me and when he said his last Earthly farewell he was really broken up. She wasn't. She smiled and patted his hand and was a comfort to him.

On the 30th of September, 1934, Mother passed quietly away. She had told me a few hours before, that "your Grandmother and Grandfather have been here." I was startled and looked it. She said I needn't look like that, she did not have an hallucination, that they stood by the bed and talked to her. I believe it. So she did have her wish...to pass away in her own home, in her own room, in her own bed.

Such a crowd attended her funeral that many had to stand outside and listen to the service through the open window, people I had never seen before from Idaho and Wyoming. She was indeed a very beloved soul, and she in turn loved people and especially little children. Some of those who had spent their childhood in Round Valley and knew her came back from wherever they lived to pay respect to her. God has blessed her memory.

So now in this year 1976, more than one hundred years since James and Merlin built their first little cabin there, the little village which once was a ward, with a school finds only one Kearn and two Earleys living there. The old have passed away, the young have moved away. But regardless of who comes and who goes, the Valley will be as it was countless ages ago -- quiet, serene, and beautiful.

--Written by Grace Kearn Lamborn  
January, 1976.

--Youngest and only surviving child of  
James and Merlin Eastham Kearn.

I don't believe I wrote of my sister Ethel's death. She was on my mind but it seemed I didn't come to the proper place to record it. She died April 24th, 1912 after the birth of her second child, Edith. She was only 25 and the Bishop said at her funeral she had been his right hand. She was always willing to do what he asked of her in the ward. Mother's grief was deep, but her faith never wavered.